

Exchange With Reporters in Council Bluffs, Iowa
February 28, 2001

Earthquake in Washington State

Q. Mr. President, any reaction to the earthquake news?

The President. I talked to the FEMA Director. He is on top of it. He is gathering all the information. He is in touch with the officials in the State of Washington. I think the Governor is on an airplane now, but as soon as he lands, we'll be in touch. Then we will assess whatever damage, and we will provide whatever resources are necessary to help the people.

Q. When were you told?

The President. I was told in Omaha.

Q. Do you have a message for the people of Washington?

The President. Well, God bless, obviously. Anything we can do to help, we will do so.

Q. Can you talk about your contingency plan as part of your budget outline and how this—

The President. Well, we've got money set aside for emergencies such as these.

NOTE: The exchange began at approximately 2:35 p.m. at the Old Carnegie Library. In his remarks, the President referred to Gov. Gary Locke of Washington. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks at a Leadership Forum in Council Bluffs
February 28, 2001

The President. Well, thank you, Bill, very much. I want to thank our panelists. It's kind of family day here. [Laughter] Speaker, it's good to see you, sir. I've enjoyed campaigning with you here. I've spent a lot of quality time here in the great State of Iowa, and I'm glad to be back.

I will say one thing as an aside, that I never met a more kind group of people than the good people of Iowa. Even if they weren't for you, they were kind. But I really—I have fond memories of traveling to your great State, and I want to thank the good citizens of Council Bluffs for welcoming me back here again.

Let me talk a little bit about the budget. Because in order to get a budget passed, the President must count on the people. My speech last night was really not to Members of the House and the Senate; my speech last night was to the people of America. It was a great opportunity for

me to go around, or through the process, however you want to look at it, and go directly to people who had an interest in their Government.

Before I begin, though, I'm also mindful that I'll get nothing done unless I get something through the House and the Senate. And we've got three House Members traveling with us today, people who I respect a lot: one, your current Congressman Greg Ganske; Tom Latham; and Jim Leach. They flew down and reminded me the entire way down how important the issues are to Iowa, issues like ethanol. [Laughter]

I said it—when I told them on the way down, when I said I support ethanol, I meant it. I supported it in the caucuses; I supported it in the general election; and I support the use of ethanol as the President of the United States. Now that we've gotten the ethanol issue straight, let me talk about the budget.